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CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PREVENTATIVE DIPLOMACY: THE G-8 ROUNDTABLE REPORT

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October 19, 1999
Toronto, Ontario

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ISBN: 0-662-30114-5
E2-233/1999E

[illegible] 943-8278
Internet address: http://www.[illegible] Fax: (613) 992-0687

103-07652/

REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

October 19, 1999
Toronto

October 7, 1999

Dear Friends,

In partnership with the Global and Human Issues Bureau and the Policy Planning staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we are organising a roundtable on conflict prevention in preparation for the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting next December in Berlin. We would like to invite you to participate in this small roundtable which will take place on October 19, 1999, in Toronto. We will start at 10AM and work through lunch until 2 PM. Professor Janice Stein at the University of Toronto has kindly agreed to host us.

You may know that the G-8 Foreign Ministers will meet in December to consider conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Several G-8 countries are presently making proposals on how to usefully advance these issues. The Toronto Roundtable is an opportunity to contribute views from outside government to Canada's policy thinking for the G-8 effort.

Themes and topics under consideration include:

I) Capacity building, conflict prevention and reduction
- a) UN activity
- b) Regional conflict prevention mechanism
- c) Civilian rapid reaction
- d) Sanctions

II) Reducing the capacity for violence/war
- a) Controlling small arms
- b) Attention to mercenaries
- c) Attention to organized crime, drugs and diamonds
- d) Attention to human rights and the development of humanitarian law

III) Strengthening societies in danger of conflict
- a) The impact of international financial institutions
- b) The impact of multinational corporations
- c) The impact of environmental problems (i.e., the scarcity of water)
- d) National Security Forces
- e) Issues related to child soldiers

Some further questions and concerns include, for example: Is the concept of conflict prevention adequate? Does the G-8 have a role to play in conflict prevention and if yes what kind of a role? What can Canada achieve in this context and what are its priorities?

Your contributions to develop this list of themes and issues and to reflect on Canada's approach and agenda for this G-8 discussion are most welcome.

Please, get in touch with Yannick Lamonde (613- 944-0391). We will reimburse your travel expenses and we encourage you to book your tickets in advance in economy class.

I look forward to seeing you in Toronto.

Sincerely,

Steve Lee
National Director

Conflict Prevention Roundtable
University of Toronto
Massey College, 4 Devonshire Place, Round Room
Tuesday, October 19, 1999
10am - 2pm

List of Participants

Janice Stein - University of Toronto (host)
Steve Lee - Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development (chair)
Andrew Mack - Office of the Secretary General - UN
Nancy Gordon - Care Canada
Michael Pearson - MCB Pearson Consulting LTD
Erica Simpson - University of Western Ontario
Dan Omeara - UQAM
José-Francisco Valiente - UQAM
Fen Hampson - Carleton University
Jim Bayer - Royal Roads University
Charles Van Der Donckt - DFAIT
Vanessa Kent - DFAIT
Marketa Geisler - Rapporteur - CCFPD

Closing time guest: Margaret MacMillan, Editor of International Journal

Regrets

Eric Hoskins - Senior Policy Advisor to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Jocelyn Coulon - Pearson Peacekeeping Centre - Montreal
David Welch - University of Toronto
Ron Diebert - University of Toronto
Helene Viau - UQAM
Mark Zacher - University of British Columbia
David Mutimer - York University - Toronto
Christopher Cushing - DFAIT

Conflict Prevention Roundtable
University of Toronto
Massey College, 4 Devonshire Place, Round Room
Tuesday, October 19, 1999
10am - 2pm

AGENDA

10:00 - 10:15	Introduction - Steve Lee/Janice Stein
10:15 - 12:30	Discussion
12:30 - 13:00	Working Lunch
13:00 - 14:00	Discussion
14:00	Wrap-up/Conclusions

REPORT FROM THE ROUNDTABLE ON CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY

Toronto, October 19, 1999

On October 19, 1999, the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, in partnership with the Global and Human Issues Bureau and the Policy Planning staff of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, organised a roundtable on Conflict Prevention. The roundtable brought together leading International Relations experts to contribute views from outside government to Canada's policy thinking for the G-8 Political Directors meeting in October and the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting in December in Berlin.

The Synopsis of the Discussion

The Institutions

The reason for the emergence of Conflict Prevention as an urgent foreign policy topic is the failure of Collective Security, according to Andrew Mack, Director of the Strategic Planning Unit, Executive Office of the Secretary General of the UN, who opened the discussion. What and where are the tools to prevent conflict today?

- **Regional organisations**, perhaps with the exception of NATO, do not have the capacity.

- **The UN**

  There are several barriers to effective Conflict Prevention activities at the **UN**.

  - There is a division of labour/expertise problem. For instance, there is no "lessons learned" unit. The Special Reporters of the Secretary General (SRSG) often lack knowledge of the countries and areas they are assigned to when they take up those responsibilities. Another problem with the SRSGs is that they are appointed after a conflict has erupted rather than before. (The obvious political implications of appointing SRSGs before a "potential" conflict erupts was noted). The UN Department of Political Affairs is focussed on individual/singular issues like human rights and has difficulty to address complex "horizontal" issues.
  - Effective Conflict Prevention by the UN could lead or be seen to lead to the demise of those governments that are asked to implement Conflict Prevention measures (member states).

- There is a difficulty to commit long-term resources for Conflict Prevention

At the UN, nevertheless, the focus is slowly shifting from preoccupation with such issues as prevention of wars from reoccurring, responding to immediate crises, or post-conflict peace-building, to addressing pre-conflict situations. Preventive Diplomacy is also emphasised by the Secretary General. However, successful examples are few. Getting the UN system to move on Conflict Prevention will be very difficult. However, there exists some momentum.

- Another instrument of conflict prevention could be the **World Bank and other International Financial Institutions** through conditionality. A debate developed on this issue surrounding the ability and willingness to use conditionality by banks for which lending in developing countries is a key business. Bankers argue that they are in the business of lending, while others stress the power of the banks (IFIs) to press conditions (i.e., Indonesia-Timor)

- The discussion then turned to a possible role for the **G-8** in Conflict Prevention. Those in favour of the concept argued that the role of the G-8 as an important political and diplomatic forum has been increasing. The G-8 could become key in global peace and security issues. There are several factors in favour of the G-8 including:
  - the active participation of the US,
  - the overlap with the P-5,
  - international political and economic weight,
  - an already evolving international security agenda (supported by policy work on issues, such as nuclear safety, anti-terrorism, and small arms),
  - potential to galvanise political support for issues.

The objection to the G-8 becoming a lead instrument for Conflict Prevention is that it could usurp the UN Security Council -- an unacceptable situation to some due to the exclusionary nature of what can be called the "G-7 action club."

Nevertheless, the G-8 could strategically act as a catalyst. Discussions in the G-8 could jump-start action in the Security Council. In this way the G-8 could be seen as supporting the UN rather than attempting to duplicate and interfere. While the Germans proposed the creation of a formal G-8 Conflict Prevention "Secretariat" for that purpose, Canada is favouring a more informal G-8 Conflict Prevention "Expert Group." Linking of the G-8 with the proposed G-20 parallel meeting in Berlin could alleviate fears of the G-8 becoming an executive committee and usurping the UN. Moreover, such a connection would ensure that economic stability issues are linked to global peace and security issues.

There are structures already in place in the international system with a capacity and mandate to address Conflict Prevention. The comparative advantage of the G-8 rests in agenda setting and in galvanising political support for issues.

The Agenda

Many participants expressed their concerns about the Conflict Prevention agenda. Janice Stein argued that in order to diminish the danger of Conflict Prevention becoming a "flavour of the month" fad, there must be a **focus. Critical trade-offs** should be identified to establish priorities and do-able goals. The global civil service should mobilise public opinion and "sell" ideas to people more effectively.

The **link between security and development** needs to be explored and strengthened in approaches to Conflict Prevention. Does security lead to development or *vise versa*? Social science studies have generated contradictory evidence.

Dan Omeara made the link between World Bank policies (i.e., **Structural Adjustment**) and the deterioration of societies (including both security and development). Structural Adjustment programmes have not led to improvement in equality. On the contrary, in many instances, they have led to scrapping re-distribution policies and contributed to the "criminalisation" of economies. The assumption that conflict is automatically reduced with the introduction of a market democracy should be challenged.

Fen Hampson pointed out the need to have clear definitions. What do we mean by Conflict Prevention or Preventive Diplomacy? According to him, there are three main overlapping aspects of **Preventive Diplomacy.**

1) Diplomacy and mediation conducted continually by the diplomatic profession (Track I).
2) Preventive disarmament with a human security dimension (i.e., small arms) to which there exists some political resistance. (The G-8 could act as a forum for agenda setting).
3) Peace building/development that involves key international institutions (International Financial Institutions) It is this field that Canada should concentrate our Conflict Prevention interests/initiatives..

Charles van der Donckt (DFAIT) drew attention to the difficulty the human security framework poses for Conflict Prevention agenda building. In order to better address the comprehensive human security agenda, van der Donckt suggested several practical recommendations on how to draw from the extensive catalogue of conflict prevention activities we could undertake. The first would be to address and enhance implementation procedures in multilateral settings, and the second would be to draw together human security theoreticians and geographical bureaus inside the Foreign Affairs bureaucracy.

Andrew Mack offered a few comments on the difficulty of locating the sources of conflict as well as responding to them. Statistics actually point to a decline in the number of conflicts across the globe and to the rise of democracies. Leverage through economic conditionality is controversial as is the readiness of the Western democracies to lose lives in distant conflicts. As

ODA spending declines the leverage decreases even more.

The issues for Conflict Prevention identified were:

1. Horizontal inequality (occurs when power and resources are unequally distributed between groups that are differentiated in other ways than just wealth and income – for instance by religion or language) leading to group-group conflicts
2. UN reaction capabilities (information, diplomatic, resources)
3. International Criminal Court
4. Civil-military relations
5. Operationalising human security
6. Resource commitments
7. Galvanising regional leaders/states
8. Developing an early warning system
9. UN rapid reaction forces (note: Canada's proposal for Rapid Reaction Capacity at the UN)
10. The need to examine "what works" (i.e., leadership, national interest, morality, institutional capacity)
11. ODA as a Conflict Prevention tool

The importance of expert consultations feeding the Conflict Prevention agenda was stressed in the context of the G-8 upcoming expert meeting and other Canadian/G-8 activities. NGOs, research institutions, experts, academics and others should be invited to share their expertise. There is a recognised need for the Department/high level officials to include civil society in this area of foreign policy development. Another issue identified during the roundtable was the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation among government Departments (i.e., DND, CIDA, DFAIT, and others), among and between governments, NGOs, experts and others.

The procedural "apparent" imperatives notwithstanding, the "what" question still remains a key problem, especially given the fact that Canadian officials are themselves offering a catalogue of 49 issues for Conflict Prevention views/approaches by the G-8.

Steve Lee closed the discussion by noting that there needs to be more discussion on the role of the G-8, on the nature of Conflict Prevention, and on the specific value and focus of Canadian ideas. This discussion needs to include government officials, probably from several Departments, and civil society experts, especially universities and NGOs. The discussion group today was invited to serve as a contact group for a growing discussion.

If the G-8 is to play a role in thinking about or acting in Conflict Prevention there needs to be a detailed exploration of specifics and the link to the UN. References in the G-8 communiques and vague statements of concern/interests are not enough and in fact could contribute to "flavour of the month" cynicism.

In doing that Canada, and other G-8 countries need to sharpen definitions, priorities, focus and trade offs. The G-8 can then provide a useful agenda setting function, one that will include the US. This discussion, like the CCFPD one last week on Small Arms, draws attention to the need to better link security and development. It was agreed that views and feedback from Canada's Political Director (ADM/DFAIT) and others would be helpful.

For further information, please, contact Marketa Geisler at (613) 944-6023.

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